



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

Testimony on: HB0299 - Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 23, 2023

Bill Contact: Delegate Mary Lehman

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as several nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and that address equity for all residents in our communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0299 because it will provide transparency about disposal of toxic used synthetic turf and turf infill for synthetic turf fields.

Synthetic turf fields are made from rolls of plastic “grass” blades weighed down and filled in with hundreds of thousands of pounds of “infill” made from ground up used tires, silica sand, and/or alternative plastic particles. The plastic “grass” contains PFAS and other toxins and ground up tires also contain multiple toxins. Each synthetic turf playing field contains about 200 tons of toxic mixed plastic waste: approximately two acres of plastic carpet with infill, typically from about 40,000 shredded waste tires or other plastic infill. However, we don’t even know how many synturf fields there are in Maryland or what happens to them or their toxic waste.

The removal and replacement cycle for synthetic turf fields is typically every six to ten years. This results in a huge amount of toxic waste. There is no recycling of synthetic turf in US, and local, national, and international media outlets have covered the growing problem of synturf waste. Anne Arundel, Prince George’s, and Montgomery County municipal solid waste facilities report they would decline used synthetic turfs due to volume and weight. There are also no state or federal regulations for safe disposal of synthetic turf or its infill, and there are many documented examples of irresponsible disposal – including dumping the material in lower-income communities. In a 2019 Maryland legislative hearing on disposal of synthetic turf, the president of the leading trade group, the Synthetic Turf Council (STC), acknowledged that there are no laws or regulations regarding the disposal of synthetic turf. The STC itself recommends end-of-life chain of custody certification and describes the disposal issue as “enormous” and “challenging.”

HB0299 will begin to address this important and growing problem by requiring the custodian of each synthetic turf sports and playing field to report relevant information about the synturf field, including its location, manufacturer, size, brand, area, and weight, to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Similar information will need to be reported each time a synturf field is installed, removed, reused, or disposed. The reporting requirement is a simple, non-burdensome data-point. There is no requirement for any approval from government. Stakeholders and citizens should be able to access a chain of custody showing what happens to the material. The STC’s own guidelines support this

goal. STC and individual firms have long claimed to be good stewards who aim for repurposing, reusing, and recycling. This is their chance to show their commitment to our communities and the environment. The reporting will also assure buyers they are dealing with an honest, transparent, accountable vendor.

Maryland is not alone in facing a growing synturf problem. Enacting HB0299 is an important opportunity to get a handle on the extent of the problem so we can move toward a solution. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0299 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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